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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

AN HISTORICAL ADDRESS

By Walter P. Beckwith,

Principal of the State Normal School at Salem, Mass.

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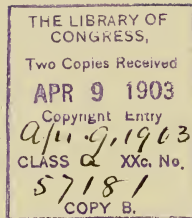
AN HISTORICAL ADDRESS.

BY WALTER P. BECKWITH,

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Historical characters are like books. The really great books are few in number,—neither are they easily distinguished at their appearance. Occasionally one excites a great commotion; everybody is reading and talking of it; the circulating libraries can hardly supply the demand. In a few weeks,—at longest, a few months,—the interest is gone; the book is forgotten. Once in ten years, a book appears whose usefulness and popularity steadily increase for a time; it endures for a generation. But how few are known or read now that were printed a hundred years ago! All are forgotten,—save one in a million. They have done their work; they have played for a brief time their little parts in the world's drama: they are found only upon the highest shelves and in the most distant alcoves of antiquarian libraries.

So with men. How many who have been voters for thirty years can recite the names of the governors of this state for that time? Yet at each election, your interest has been keen; sometimes it has been intense; occasionally absorbing and thrilling; and these names, now forgotten, have been fresh in your thoughts and ready upon your lips. But the recollections of living contemporaries become fainter and fainter,—the associations are destroyed,—the occurrences

of a generation ago become dim in memory ; young men and women grow up to whom the great men and the great deeds of other times are only stories ; and, one by one, the great mass of the actors of other days sink into oblivion, and find their burial within the leaves of the biographical dictionary.

Then so much depends upon the “point of view.” In this regard, men are like mountains. A height of land towers over our heads : is it a mountain, splitting the clouds, and joining the earth and the sky ; or is it a mere knoll, shutting from our view the real peaks which are just beyond it ? In a deep and narrow valley, one has no idea how some mighty peak dominates the whole landscape for miles and miles. But when he gets away upon the other summits, he sees at once how easily it is the master and king of the entire region.

I repeat—so with men. We do not judge the public men of our own time with intelligence even,—let alone fairness and candor. No man, it is said, is a hero to his own valet. The genuine greatness or the essential littleness of those who figure largely in the world’s affairs is not clearly perceived in their own times. To illustrate by familiar examples : how have the contemporary estimates of Daniel Webster and of Charles Sumner changed since their deaths. You all know how John A. Andrew is reckoned to-day ; but in 1862, there was a strong opposition to his re-election, even within his own party, and no less a man than Charles Devens was made the candidate of dissatisfied republicans, and of democrats eager to profit by the dissensions of their opponents.

At rare intervals, there appears upon the stage of human affairs, a man, whose life and deeds and character compel the attention, the admiration, and the lasting affection of the world. His is "one of the few, the immortal names, that were not born to die." Generations come and generations go; but his memory, living and green, does not fade. Parties rise and fall; but his name becomes a household word, dear to the hearts and the lips of his countrymen. Great issues are settled so that the settlements mark clear gains for human progress; his fortunes had been married to those great principles and his fame is forever linked with their triumph. His services, too carelessly estimated during his life-time,—his motives, often lightly aspersed by the thoughtless and the ignorant; his relations to progress and truth, so rarely understood by his fellow-citizens, particularly when they seemed to threaten the triumph of some party or sect,—these at last become evident. Then he receives the place in history to which he is entitled; his services, his motives and his various merits bring him again the happy experience of the modest guest, and the muse of history is constantly inviting him to "come up higher."

The attention of the busy world is caught and held. The friends, who knew him best, record, all too tardily and scantily, what they can recall. He was many-sided: no one of his associates apprehended all the manifestations of his character; soon authorities are disputing whose view is reliable and whose estimate is correct. He has been an actor in complicated and perplexing situations, amid which no human being could possibly have taken a course and formed

judgments such as would have been taken and formed by even one of a hundred critics of human character and action. Hence what one approves, another condemns ; where this man sees the brightness of noon, another catches only the darkness of midnight ; the act which appears to me only a rightful exertion of lawful authority is to my neighbor arrogant and over-bearing tyranny ; one of us sees and considers one circumstance at a given time or a single set of circumstances and judges that or these to be the key to the situation, while another deems them exceedingly trivial and attaches the chief importance to another course of events. So, always to some extent, and often to a great extent, the haze of uncertainty and doubt gathers about the hero, and the mystery is made so deep that unanimous agreement is impossible.

The wise man, in studying the career and character of famous personages will endeavor to brush away, so far as he may, the mist and cobweb of detail and of separate comparatively petty acts, and to find, if he can, the master-key which unlocks the secret places of the great man's personality.

We are to deal with one of the most conspicuous characters of human history,— a character, which, as it seems to me, is destined to receive, in the future, constantly more and more the attention and the scrutiny of the world. It was given to Abraham Lincoln, as it has been given to few men in the history of the world, to personify a great cause. In its success or failure was bound up, whether the fact was recognized or not, very much more than the mere existence

of the Union. The progress of that contest, by the very logic of its events, made him the glad exponent of human freedom, without distinction of race or color. In this solemn and awful station, with a heroism as real as that of the generals and soldiers who followed the flag where canons roared and danger was manifest, with a fidelity which never wearied and a wisdom which is becoming more and more the wonder and the admiration of men, he stood for four years, as the head and the heart of this nation and the representative and champion of that principle of self-government "which should not perish from the earth." It was also given to this civilian to be the most illustrious martyr of that cause. This crowning sacrifice evoked the sympathy of even his "erring brethren," and softened, in no small degree, the bitterness of their defeat. Splendid as was his life, it may be that in his death he rendered his greatest service to his country.

If one should attempt merely to trace the political career of Abraham Lincoln, during its continuance of thirty years,—to make measurably clear the skill with which he interpreted the sentiments and the purposes of the "plain people," (of whom, as he said, the Lord must be very fond, because he makes so many of them,)—to set forth the patience and the courage of his struggle,—to decipher the finesse with which he threaded his way, quietly, steadily, triumphantly, through a labyrinth of perplexing entanglement,—such a task would be comparatively easy.

But if one goes back to his birth, and undertakes to estimate the sources and the strength of the various forces

which combined to produce him,—the individual he was,—to apportion to Puritan ancestry and Quaker environment, to the admixture of “poor white” blood, to the possible replenishing of an exhausted line of descent from a source which cannot be determined, to the shiftlessness and the improvident example of his father, to the somewhat uncertain influence of a mother who scarcely lived to see him emerge from childhood, to the wholesome and healthy care of a step-mother who deserves at least as much recognition as she has ever received, to a constantly shifting habitat beyond the outskirts of civilization, — if one, I say, begins the task with the determination of being thorough in this sense,—to the end that he may produce a psychological explanation of the greatness of this man, he may well despair of success.

For the difficulties at which I have briefly hinted increase rather than diminish as the study progresses. We can fairly well understand the environment of his early years,—but the fact of understanding increases rather than lessens our perplexity. Our chief difficulty does not arise from the disagreement of witnesses ; that is often encountered, and, helps to complicate the problem. But we find Lincoln living until 1840, in a section where were combined, as such a zone always combines, the vices of the old and the limitations of the new ; and, for our lives, we cannot, with confidence and candor, assert that he was, in any extraordinary degree, apparently above or in advance of his surroundings.

Yet we get some hints of better things. For, while his opportunity for attending school was next to nothing, he was an eager reader of such books as fell into his hands ; and

fortunately, perhaps, for him, books were not so plenty in those days as they are at present, and those he read did a great deal for him. He was somewhat touched by the vices of his surroundings ; but, while he was of enormous physical strength, though of most ungainly awkwardness, and while few were his equals in personal encounter, he did not care for fighting and did not wantonly exercise his power. He drank but little, in a section and at a time when whiskey was regarded as one of the necessities of life. He was kindly of spirit, easy in his disposition, obliging in habit, rather disinclined to perform physical labor, quaint and homely in his manner of speech, with a tenacious memory, and of the most simple-hearted, matter-of-course, and transparent honesty.

Very certainly, his was an active mind. By nature, he was apparently not attracted,—that is, by nature, as the term is commonly employed. It is a most interesting feature of his speeches,—and I ask you to verify my statement as you have opportunity, for I do not recall seeing the fact noted elsewhere,—that one rarely, if ever, finds in them illustrations or metaphors drawn from the trees and flowers, or from the fields and streams. Yet he lived, all his boyhood and youth, in the very midst of an almost virgin wilderness, where nature, little troubled by man, bore full sway.

As I read the story of his life and growth, I find the secret of his great success in his intimate sympathy with and understanding of the PEOPLE. “He offered,” says Emerson, “no shining qualities at the first encounter ; he did not offend by

superiority. He had a face and manner which disarmed suspicion, which inspired confidence, which confirmed goodwill." He early won a hold upon the people which he never lost. His first election to the legislature was from a strong democratic district; as a candidate before the people he was defeated only once. The attachment of the people to him came at last to be a matter of affection and instinct. In them he found his stimulus and his inspiration. He never came to have what would be called a comprehensive knowledge of public affairs as we are bound to estimate the knowledge of public men. His lore was the knowledge of men. His anecdotes deal with persons. His illustrations,—and what other public character ever employed such a wealth of illustration, either in number or pertinency?—are drawn from human experience. But his wit, effective and keen, did not take the form of repartee, and it left no sting behind. He delighted in parable and anecdote. His sense of the ridiculous was so keen that it often served him as a refuge in the midst of difficulties and perplexities which otherwise might have overwhelmed him. He hailed Artemus Ward and Petroleum V. Nasby as benefactors of the human race. No witticism escaped his keen appreciation. Naturally, in literature, his greatest admiration was reserved for its greatest master in characterizing the faculties, passions, and quips of the human mind,—for Shakespeare, who, so incredibly more than any other writer, knew "what was in man," and the choice passages of the great dramatist were entirely within his command. As an advocate, his strength lay in his wonderful power of simple and clear statement; he was

able at once to divest the issue of all unimportant and perplexing details and make evident the real point at stake. In the later years of his life, the lighter qualities of his style were overshadowed by a growing seriousness and solemnity, and his speech fell into a tone of simple and majestic grandeur, so that it may be truthfully said that this unlettered man has furnished the world with models of English prose, worthy to be ranked with that of Milton, and Bacon, and Emerson, and King James's Bible.

I do not intend to recite, in detail, the events of his life: so I pass over the story of his early political career, of his membership in the Illinois legislature, of his service in the Black Hawk war, of his single term in Congress, of his struggles at the bar, of his triumphs and defeats as a politician, of the cheerful readiness with which, "for the good of the cause," he surrendered his ambition to be a United States senator when Lyman Trumbull was finally chosen, of his great campaign against Stephen A. Douglas in 1858, and of his nomination and election to the presidency in 1860. To these matters, at least to some of them, we shall have occasion to refer,—we shall use them not for purposes of narration but of illustration and explanation. What he had become in all those years of labor and discipline, we will let the story of 1861-65 show.

Such as he was, he came to the time of his trial. With less official experience than any civilian who had previously entered upon the presidency,—with absolutely no experience in any executive position,—Abraham Lincoln stood before the American people on the 4th of March, 1861, and swore to do

his duty and maintain the constitution. Seven states had already seceded. The Confederate government was fully organized. North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee and Arkansas were on the verge of withdrawal, and the governor of each was exerting all his influence to that end. Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and, to a less extent, Delaware, were torn by the contest between the opposing factions. The city of Washington was honey-combed with secession influences and almost daily emissaries of the Montgomery government came and went freely. The entire social life of the capital was tainted with the virus of unfaithfulness. The treasury was practically empty and the credit of the government at a low ebb. The departments were full of secession sympathizers. There was no navy worth the mention; such as there was had been scattered to the four quarters of the globe. The regular army, only a handful of men at the best, was an uncertain and unknown quantity, and hundreds of its officers, educated at West Point, had already resigned to "go with their states;" of those who remained no man knew who could be trusted. The resources of the government adapted to the prosecution of war had been scattered or put within easy reach of the secessionists. The forts and navy-yards in the seceded states had been seized and their contents appropriated by the leaders of the rebellion. Communication with the capital by the loyal states was possible only through an unreliable, even if not actually hostile country; Mr. Lincoln himself had come thither by an unexpected and secret journey in the night-time, to avoid a danger which was believed at least to be real.

It is hard to see what more could have been done or omitted by the out-going administration to increase the difficulty of the situation. The position had indeed been a most trying one for Mr. Buchanan and his advisers,—even had they been united and determined to maintain, at any cost, the integrity of the Union. The president himself was advanced in years and feeble in body. A man of unsullied personal character, whose public service had been long and in the main honorable, he had always been of those, (as Mr. Blaine most pertinently points out,) who are excellent in counsel but comparatively feeble in action. During his administration he had most unfortunately allied himself with the wrong side in the dissensions which finally wrecked his party, and had permitted himself to be made a mere cat's-paw of the Southern democrats in the Kansas iniquity and the resulting warfare upon Senator Douglas. After the forced withdrawal of the secession members of his cabinet, he had yielded to the influence of Black, Dix, and Stanton, who at least kept him from doing more harm. The net result of it all was that he did nothing, either to avert or to lessen the horror of the coming storm.

It has often been said that Buchanan might have done what Jackson had done in nullification times and have crushed the whole secession movement at a single blow. But Jackson had only South Carolina to deal with; the southern people had not then been accustomed to the talk of secession and of northern hostility to their interests, as manifested in the triumph of a party having substantially its entire strength in the North. These facts make a vast difference. Further-

more, they had become accustomed to underestimating the North. For myself, I am pretty firmly convinced that any attempt to deal with the situation as Jackson did in 1832 would have hurried the border states into secession, and that Mr. Lincoln would not have been inaugurated in Washington, if, indeed, his election had ever been constitutionally declared by the two houses of Congress.

Not that Buchanan and his advisers foresaw this. But the weak and vacillating course of the president is easily accounted for by his natural timidity, his advanced age, the superstitious regard for precedents which often grows up in the minds of men long in public office, the personal hold which some of the prominent southern leaders in the cabinet and in Congress had exercised upon him throughout his administration, so that he had been made whether willingly or unwillingly a prominent factor in the disruption of his own party and the consequent easy election of Mr. Lincoln. Not all the uncertainty and vacillation in those days is to be charged to Mr. Buchanan. Neither house of Congress, neither party nor any faction in either house, could determine to what extent it was willing to compromise the differences between North and South,—or, if so, what it was willing to concede to such an end. The mayor of New York gravely proposed that it should become a “free city,” after certain European models. The tone of Horace Greeley’s Tribune, by far the most influential newspaper at that time in the country,—contributed to the general uncertainty.

Again, it is far from certain that it would have been well, in the long run, if the rebellion had been nipped in the bud

by a sharp and decisive stroke. The union would indeed have been saved, for the time being, if such a stroke could have been made successfully. But slavery would have been left; and we can see now, if men could not see then, that any settlement of the difficulty which left slavery in existence, could only put off, not avert forever, the awful struggle.

For we shall err greatly if we think of and judge the civil war to have been merely the outcome of a limited, cheap, and vulgar conspiracy. It was preceded, indeed, by conspiracy; it was accompanied by vulgar and disgraceful intrigue; its initiation and its progress were attended by all the incidents which commonly accompany great national convulsions. But it was not dependent for its inception or its support upon the ability or the wickedness of any one man, or even of any one set of men. If Jefferson Davis had not lived at all, or if he had died upon the battle-fields of Mexico before the slavery conflict had reached an acute stage, we should still at some time have had the war. I should not take the trouble to combat the hypothesis of a limited conspiracy, but it does not account for all the facts,—it is not comprehensive, it is unphilosophical, because it is so incomplete.

The truth is that the war was a conflict between two entirely distinct and incompatible forms of civilization,—each mighty in its fashion, each with some splendid qualities of one sort and another, each with valiant and loyal champions, each with certain advantages in the prosecution of the great struggle. There was a right side, and there was a wrong side; but these qualities of right and wrong did not depend

upon the fact that one side stood for the integrity and the other for the dismemberment of a great nation, or even upon the fact that certain men who had sworn allegiance to the flag and the constitution had broken their oaths.

The cause of the North was right because there was in fact an "irrepressible conflict" between freedom and slavery, and because the cause of freedom became so bound up with the cause of the North that both must triumph or fail together. There were few, even after the war had begun, who understood how profoundly this was true; before the war, there were practically none. Even in the convention which nominated Mr. Lincoln for the presidency, a motion to incorporate in the platform the words of the declaration of independence that "all men are created free and equal" was once voted down; and the convention was only recalled to a realization of its blunder by one of the soul-stirring and illuminating speeches of George William Curtis.

I have thus dwelt at considerable length upon the situation which faced Mr. Lincoln at his inauguration, and upon the real nature of the struggle between the North and the South. I have done so because it seems to me we are too prone to consider the events of history as separate and distinct, instead of trying to trace the relations of one to others, as cause and effect. I am not speaking as the apologist of the Buchanan administration. The fact that it did nothing is its just and severest condemnation. But I believe the war had to come; and, once begun, it was inevitable, as I read history, that it should continue, until, as Mr. Lincoln said, four years later, "all the wealth piled up by the bondman's

two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword." But the wisest and the best of men made serious mistakes in those times. Many under-rated the duration and the dangers of the struggle. Secretary Seward proposed to the President a fantastic and impracticable course of action, which practically involved war with half of Europe, of which war the Secretary was to be the director. Mr. Lincoln stood between two classes of extremists at the North,—of whom one was eager for the "blood-letting" to begin, and the other ready to sacrifice anything, even to self-respect, for the sake of saving, only in form, the union of the States.

He was not carried off his feet. I think he foresaw pretty clearly the actual course of events. He had been declared elected with every formality prescribed by law and precedent, peaceably inaugurated, and held his office by a perfect title. How scrupulously and moderately he intended to exercise its high functions, he set forth in calm, conciliatory, and sincere fashion, as well as in a most admirable spirit of toleration and patriotism, in his first inaugural. At its close, in one brief paragraph, he rose to actual majesty of thought and expression:—

"I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell

the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

The irresolution of the outgoing administration had left it possible to hold,—or, at the very least, to divide,—the border states. The mad and headlong course of the Southern leaders themselves also contributed powerfully to this end. To this purpose the President immediately addressed himself. "You can have no conflict," he declared, "without being yourselves the aggressors." So strictly did he adhere to his determination of compelling the Confederates to initiate the conflict, that, when it was perfectly evident that Virginia was committed to the Southern cause, even before the passage of her ordinance of secession, he would not allow United States troops to cross the Long Bridge at Washington and step upon the "sacred soil" of the Old Dominion until her withdrawal from the Union had been formally voted. The forbearance, of which this was a type, while it seemed to involve the loss of time and was sharply condemned, was justified by the result. For, although after the assault on Sumter, four more states did secede, West Virginia was saved, East Tennessee was saved, and Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri were held in the Union. The material results of the policy which prevented them from going solidly with the South were not small, as may be seen from these figures:—

	Population 1860.	Troops furnished to Union Army.
Kentucky, . . .	1,155,000	71,000
Missouri, . . .	1,182,000	86,000
Massachusetts, . . .	1,231,000	126,000
Maryland, . . .	687,000	41,000
New Jersey, . . .	672,000	57,000
Iowa, . . .	674,000	68,000

The moral results were even greater; for the rebellion was confined to the states most distinctively the slave states, and the war thus made to appear, not only to the North, but to the world, to be a slave-holders' war.

The sagacity with which he began his administration is typical of its entire course. We cannot discuss it in detail. We must give our time rather to a view of what became its supreme feature. As, in analyzing the events of those times, slavery is found to be the important element, its destruction the crowning glory and triumph, and other events important as they bear upon this,—so, in the career of Lincoln, his attitude towards slavery and his relation to its final abolition are the most interesting and vital features. He was not an Abolitionist, as that term was used in the years before the war. The typical Abolitionists were essentially fanatics, who are governed, as has been well said, more by imagination than by judgment. They are extreme idealists, feeling no responsibility for ways and means. They take account of men as they ought to be,—not of men as they really are. I have no philippic to pronounce against such men. They are valuable for the creation and development of popular

sentiment and for awakening the moral sense of the people. Their peculiar type of mind has been the cause or spring of the great steps which the world has made in social and religious progress. John Brown, wild and chimerical as was the scheme which he attempted to carry out at Harper's Ferry, yet rendered an inestimable service to freedom, and perhaps hastened by many years the overthrow of slavery. Yet, in itself considered, it was as foolhardy an undertaking as ever occurred. Its value lay in its indirect and remote effects, which were perhaps not foreseen clearly even by Brown himself.

Lincoln did not belong to this class. We may well thank God that he did not. He was a statesman, whose province it was to secure results, to find ways and means, whose fitness consists in knowing when to strike and when to forbear. His purposes were pure and patriotic, his perception of the moral wrong of human slavery was clear, but he saw the utter futility of moving too far and too rapidly in advance of the people. The secret of his final success lay in his understanding of the temper of the people, in knowing when they were ready for a great step. His eyes had early been open to the blighting and blasting effects surely wrapped up in human slavery,—the “sum of all villanies,”—the wooden horse of our political history, never so dangerous as when it seemed to be bringing gifts. It was its insidious nature in this respect that blinded so long the moral sense of the industrial and commercial classes, and gave it the mighty support which it received in the North. During a visit to New Orleans he had received his impressions of the peculiar insti-

tution, and those impressions are on record. While a member of the Illinois legislature he had signed, with only one other member, a protest against a substantial refusal to receive "abolition" petitions. The protest was a mild one, but it illuminates the situation, for he was then a young and ambitious politician. While he was in Congress he introduced a bill providing for the gradual abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska act in 1854 had a profound effect upon the public sentiment of the Northern States. Its first political sequence was the practical disappearance of the old Whig party, which had been overwhelmingly defeated in the presidential election of 1852. Its next was the formation of the Republican party. It was recruited from the great mass of the northern Whigs, from the free-soil Democrats who had refused, especially in New York, to support General Cass in 1848, and it particularly attracted to itself, by the nomination of Fremont, an immense number of the young men of the country, and thus laid the foundation of its success in 1860. Of this new party Mr. Lincoln became a member. In common with the great majority of its leaders, he felt himself bound by the limitations which the constitution had established, and which the whole course of our political history had confirmed. Throughout his memorable debates with Douglas, in 1858, his speeches, looked at from this distance of time and event, seem singularly moderate; though, as we know, some of his friends did not then so regard them. His constant contention was that the nation certainly had the right to prevent the extension of slavery. He reiterated and empha-

sized the obligation of the national government and of the free states to let it alone where it existed. He even deprecated the manner in which the abolition agitation was sometimes carried on. He claimed the right of the white race to its superior position. He did not dispute the constitutional obligation to return fugitive slaves. The platform upon which he was nominated for President in 1860 was to the same purport, and it received his full approbation.

At the same time he recognized, even earlier and more clearly than Seward, the "irrepressible conflict" between freedom and slavery. He certainly saw farther and more clearly into the real cause of the difference between North and South than did most of his contemporaries; but perhaps not even he fully appreciated the logical result of the momentous declarations with which he opened his campaign against Douglas. The "irrepressible conflict," as he saw it, was apparently to be carried on by moral agencies, and when he said that he expected to see the Union endure, although, in his opinion, it could not endure, "half slave and half free," his probable expectation was that with the lapse of time, if slavery could be confined for the present to the states wherein it then existed, these moral agencies would work its destruction.

This result might, indeed, have ensued. The Southern leaders themselves apparently thought there was something in this view. They justified their rebellion upon very lofty grounds, whose sincerity we need not attempt to estimate; nor is it possible to judge with entire confidence how their eyes were blinded to the wrong of extending slavery by the

certainly that the political power of their section would surely wane rapidly when once it was certain that there never would be more than fifteen slave states. They illustrated again the truth of the familiar adage that the gods first make mad those who are marked for destruction. For at a time when the feeling of the North was aroused against the institution as it never had been before, they deliberately broke up the Democratic party and thus made inevitable the election of the Republican candidate for the presidency.

Lincoln had gone to the farthest point any anti-slavery man, who believed that Congress had a right to control the legislation of the territories, could go. His opposition to the extension of slavery was tempered with the most profound and scrupulous regard for constitutional and legal rights. The views he had expressed again and again before the election he repeated more than once on his journey to Washington, and formally and emphatically declared in his inaugural. These views he consistently adhered to. He would save the Union, he said,—this was his supreme purpose; he would save it with slavery, if he could; but he would save the Union. He would not strike at the institution of slavery in the states unless convinced that this step could be made a means of ensuring the salvation of the Union. He called down upon his head the bitterest denunciations of extremists, who would have destroyed slavery at any cost or risk to the Union, by delaying his consent to the employment of negroes as soldiers, by annulling the emancipation proclamations of Fremont and Hunter. He did assent to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia in

1862. And he took clear cognizance of the constantly growing anti-slavery feeling of the North. And probably it did not lessen the tendency which was drawing him towards a policy of emancipation that strong anti-slavery steps would render more unlikely the constantly dreaded interference of England in behalf of a confederacy whose corner-stone, as Alexander H. Stephens had said, was slavery. Doubtless he was convinced in his own mind, long before the emancipation proclamation was issued, what the result must be. And when the time came, and he saw, with his clear vision, that the people of the North were ready for the stroke, and that it would be indeed the master move in the great combination, there is absolutely no doubt that he put his hand to the document with a greater and more solemn satisfaction than he performed any other act during the whole war. At last his reason and his conscience were at one. The imagination of the idealist and the judgment of the practical statesman were no longer at variance. As he himself characterized it, "*It is the central act of my administration and the crowning event of the nineteenth century.*"

It is one of the strange contrasts which one may sometimes find in history, that, in our days of small things, of beginnings, of the feeble and uncertain steps of the nation's childhood, the leader and exemplar of the cause was a man of the aristocracy, if any such existed; of wealth and family; of social standing and of gentle blood—while, on the other hand, when days of wealth and power had come, when material greatness and industrial splendor were clearly foreshadowed, and the furnace was seven times heated with rage

and hate and passion ; when the rights, not of a nation, but of individual man, were at stake, our leader was one sprung from the lowest social stratum, without early advantages, a native of the wilderness, self-made, self-raised, self-sustained—the type, not so much of new Americanism, as of true Americanism, which guarantees to every man an *opportunity*. Our first conflict was the English strife for civil liberty, for the rights of the mass of the people,—considered collectively,—the strife which had made English soil red with good blood in memorable battles for five hundred years, transferred to the new world. George Washington was distinctively an Englishman of the type of Hampden and of Pym, devoted with all the ardor of which the slow but sturdy English character is capable, to the cause which he represented. But in Lincoln was represented another type,—that of genuine Americanism, not alien to, but an evolution from, his English ancestry, including its virtues and many another splendid quality. This development was made possible by his environment. Here in New England, and along the Atlantic coast, the very names brought by the English settlers and conquerors remain, to remind us, that, whether we like it or not, we are still more English than anything else : and, notwithstanding almost three hundred years of distinct life, English ideals, and manners, and prejudices still abide. But when you pass the tier of states upon the Atlantic seaboard, you find a style of name even, brought not from the Old World, but native to the soil ; and you find a type of ideals and of methods far different from those which are prevalent with us. We

are fond of saying that it is the same blood, of pointing out how many of those communities were settled from New England, and of declaring that the Old New England still lives in the great Central States. But even the blood has been largely mixed, and at the present time it is again encountering a mighty stream drawn from the same Teutonic sources,—from Germany and the Scandinavian countries,—which made the England of a thousand years ago an Anglo-Saxon nation. This element was not indeed visible in the early part of the century,—I refer to it to show how the work begun then by transplanting is being carried on in our own times,—but the great wilderness was there, and it is no new suggestion that any people removed to such surroundings are greatly modified and changed. The strong tinge of melancholy which was so noticeable in Lincoln's character has been ascribed to this influence. The typical Americanism, differentiated from other races and nations, is to spring from the mighty central section of this country; of this Abraham Lincoln was the first, the most conspicuous,—shall I say, the ideal?—product and sample. We look forward confidently and proudly to the work which we believe this true Americanism shall do for the human race. Ralph Waldo Emerson, five days after the assassination of Lincoln, said that the serene Providence presiding over the destinies of nations and taking little account of individuals, time, war, or disaster, selects for each great work the nation best fitted to perform it. The work appointed us was set forth with a fulness beyond the ability of that time to achieve in the Declaration of Independence. For the removal of the great

stumbling-block between promise and performance, between ideal and real, we are indebted, under God, to Abraham Lincoln. And what a crown that achievement is in itself! A race redeemed from bondage! The possibility of manhood for four millions of men and their descendants to the remotest generation! And what a consciousness of shame and reproach removed from our own race! The abolition of slavery was a redemption hardly less to whites than to blacks. The issues of our modern political contests sometimes seem petty and trifling,—but how infinitely better that we should be divided over tariffs, and hours of labor, and the coinage of silver, than that we should be debating with hot words and angry hearts whether man may openly buy and sell his brother man! What a step this marks of noble achievement. And we owe it, let me say again, to Abraham Lincoln!

I have no superstitious regard for great men, and no special reverence for the past, as such. I am conscious of no bias derived from early training or from the settled political views of mature life which would lead me to over-estimate the character of Abraham Lincoln or to exaggerate his services to mankind. Your thought concerning the points I have discussed may not be precisely the same as mine, but I do not think we can widely differ in our conclusions. We who remember the events of the civil war with any degree of distinctness know how the hopes and fears, the affections and the hates, the passions, the emotions, and the purposes of our people were stirred and swayed. Neither can we be ignorant how sadly and uncharitably men sometimes mis-

judged even their own neighbors and kinsfolk. We are grateful to-day that so much of the bitterness of that strife has been softened and so many of its errors corrected. The sacrifices and the prayers of those who fought and endured have been crowned with the re-establishment of a union, free from the corrupting influence of human slavery, and by the confirmation of a better understanding and a kindlier feeling between the North and the South than had existed for many years preceding the war. For much that now remains to be done, the soothing and healing influence of time must be invoked. We may not see it perfected ; but we see progress made from year to year, through education, through industrial and commercial relationships, through the breaking of old political combinations, through the influence of new issues, through the rising of a new generation, through common struggles in behalf of liberty, and through the development of a new appreciation of national unity.

For the achievement of so much as has been accomplished in thirty years, we are again indebted to the broad, kindly, and tolerant spirit which animated Mr. Lincoln, and which, at his tragical death, was so forcibly and so touchingly brought to the understanding and the comprehension of our people. That understanding has made him hardly less an object of affection and regard in the South than in the North, and it has given us a common interest in this respect without distinction of party, or sect, or descent.

So his greatness is sure to be more and more recognized as the years go by. That greatness is not due, in our eyes, to the greatness of his opportunity. For what is a great oppor-

tunity to a small man? It serves only to make his littleness more apparent. Great opportunities are matched by corresponding difficulties. This was the experience of Mr. Lincoln. He was misunderstood by those who should have known him better. He was hated by millions,—he, who had “malice towards none.” He was slandered in ways and to a degree which has found no subsequent parallel. He was caricatured as a boor and a buffoon, and that gentle humor which preserved him for his great task was made to find its only counterpart in the gross indifference of the fiddling Nero. By foreign nations he was not comprehended and was therefore maligned.

He endured it all with patience and without animosity. In all the records of his speeches and his writings, you can find no word of bitterness, no trace of repining, no lack of charity and good-will. And his faith did not waver. General Grant tells us that, in his belief, there never was a time when Lincoln did not believe the cause would be triumphant.

Such a spirit conquers the world and compels its own recognition. It is the unfailing symbol of the highest type of greatness; it makes the human race eternally its debtor. That debt we gratefully recognize; the reverence due we gladly pay. So, with a profound feeling of confident assurance, we point to this type of true Americanism, to this anointed prophet of human freedom, and we feel an assured pride in the character and the deeds of our countryman. He suffered in our behalf; he bore our griefs; he won our cause.

“ We rest in peace, where these sad eyes
Saw peril, strife, and pain ;
His was the nation's sacrifice,
And ours the priceless gain.”

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